

## Private sector: promoting health in the workplace and beyond

### What we know

All sectors of our society need to join in the response to the epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The Caribbean has double the premature NCD mortality rate of North America – twice as many people are dying between 30 and 69 years of age due to preventable diseases such as heart attack, stroke, diabetes and cancer than those in the USA. Many working age people are dying unnecessarily, resulting in personal and productivity losses.

Many private sector organisations and businesses are already running workplace wellness programmes, offering NCD screening and creating health-promoting environments for staff. Workplace wellness programmes are cost-effective, reducing employee ill-health (and lost productivity), absenteeism, high medical costs for employers and workers' compensation claims. For workers themselves, as well as gaining obvious health benefits from such programmes, they can experience increased morale and relief from the effects of household poverty, premature death, disability, loss of independence and loss of job and income.

The scope of the private sector's role in the challenge to NCDs is broader still. Some companies are working for consumers too, with a number of food manufacturers reducing salt and sugar in their products.

Caribbean Wellness Day (second Saturday in September) has also provided an opportunity for the public sector to deepen its involvement in the NCD response; proposing events, mobilising participants and bringing critical human and financial resources.



# What you can do in the private sector

## Focus on staff

### *Policies*

- Promote wellness programmes with clear goals and objectives and developed with staff input.
- Offer NCD screenings for employees annually (free or heavily subsidised).
- Integrate NCD interventions in the workplace as part of HR policy.
- Develop toolkits to help establish sustainable workplace programmes.
- Make your workplace 100% smoke-free.

### *Activities*

- Mark Caribbean Wellness Day (CWD) with health and fitness-related activities such as health fairs/ fun runs.
- Continue activities on a regular basis throughout the year, e.g. line dancing, aerobics etc.
- Support CWD by sponsoring public service announcements, advertising in newspaper supplements, and featuring the CWD logo on company merchandise.
- Where possible, provide gym/exercise facilities for employees.
- Encourage competitive challenges among employees such as a 10,000 steps challenge.
- Make blood pressure monitors and scales available to employees.
- Ensure that staff restaurants/canteens offer healthy options cooked in healthy ways.
- Support local food producers by using locally grown fruits and vegetables in staff restaurants/ canteens.
- Invite chefs to showcase recipes for easy to make, tasty, low-fat, low-salt meals.

### *If you are a food producer*

- Share good practices in product reformulation regionally, e.g. reduced salt in bread in Barbados.
- Support nutritional labelling.
- Support marketing of healthy foods.



“We’re currently doing great things at Grace Kennedy Company Ltd. We’re looking at products that we’re taking the salt out of and we’re also lowering the sugar content in some of our products... We’ve been revamping our labels, looking at calorie content and making it clear so the consumer can know what it means. Our customers are coming and asking for these things. We’re Jamaican. We’re local. And we’re making sure we stay in Jamaica for another 94 years.”

Orlean Mears, Grace Kennedy Company Ltd, Jamaica

Visit our website at [www.onecaribbeanhealth.org](http://www.onecaribbeanhealth.org) for much more on NCDs and accelerating action in the NCD response.

